

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES: TEN RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF MIGRATION TRENDS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF SUPERIORS GENERAL (UISG)

The International Union of Superiors General (UISG), which represents over 600,000 Catholic Sisters worldwide, joins in the remembrance day for all victims of migration with a call for alliances between Sisters and civil society to address the challenges of migration trends. Sister Carmen Elisa Bando, Coordinator of the International Migrants & Refugees Network at UISG, says: “We cannot turn our backs on those who risk their lives to seek dignity and hope. Today, an integral, integrative and inclusive approach to development, linking local experience to global decision-making with coherence and accountability, is more urgent than ever.”

Rome, 28th September 2023 – On the occasion of the Italian **Day of Remembrance and Reception**, celebrated on the 3rd of October in memory of the victims of migration, **the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) launches a policy brief outlining ten recommendations to tackle challenges related to migration**, with particular attention to the needs of migrants and refugees. UISG is the umbrella organisation for the leaders of Catholic women’s congregations, bringing together 1,903 members from 97 countries who represent over 600,000 Catholic Sisters worldwide.

These recommendations are intended for UISG’s partners and allies, national governments and intergovernmental bodies, international development organisations and civil society networks, and all people of goodwill committed to building a more just and sustainable world. The recommendations emerged from UISG’s **Sister-Led Dialogue on Migration** held in July, the second of a series of dialogues organised by the UISG initiative **Sisters Advocating Globally**, in collaboration with the **Global Solidarity Fund**. The event took place in Rome on the 3rd of July 2023, with the participation of Sisters **from UISG and projects on the ground**, intergovernmental and interreligious institutions, civil society organisations, academic experts and media representatives.

UISG’s ten recommendations are: **1.** Support internally displaced people and international migrants through language education, skills training and capacity-building projects that can enhance resilience to the challenges of migration. **2.** Support people in transit by providing timely and accurate information, particularly about the dangers of journeying to Europe, in order to counter overwhelming misinformation. **3.** Promote the integration of migrants and refugees by fostering a sense of safety and belonging, particularly through affective and relational community action. **4.** Engage immigrant and host communities in shared intercultural endeavours that can help to bridge social and cultural differences. **5.** Utilise the informative and educational potential of media platforms to raise political awareness on the realities of immigration. **6.** Advocate for a linguistic shift from discourses of fear, threat, emergency and war towards conversations about inclusion, integration, development and mutual enrichment. **7.** In particular, model and promote a shift in media narratives by creating space for the voices of people with lived experiences of migration and platforming not only their concerns, but also their proposed solutions. **8.** Establish alliances between aid agencies, religious institutions and media organisations to jointly resist anti-migrant propaganda, and develop a shared vision for overcoming legislative obstacles. **9.** Collaborate with governments of transitory, non-EU countries in adopting and implementing ethical measures to respect the dignity of all people, and curb smuggling and abuse. **10.** Lobby EU governments to institute laws – scripted to reflect the EU’s ethical values and humanitarian vision – that allow fair, equal and legal access for all migrants to the EU, regardless of their reason for migration.

“UISG believes the international community has a responsibility to provide assistance to all migrants and refugees, guaranteeing the full respect of their rights, and facilitating their integration within host communities. Today, an integral, integrative and inclusive approach to development, linking local experience to global decision-making with coherence and accountability, is more urgent than ever – says

Sister Carmen Elisa Bando, Coordinator of the International Migrants & Refugees Network at UISG.
– *In this spirit, UISG has hosted its Sister-led dialogues in 2023, in order to develop a network among Sisters worldwide, and to build broad communication channels and a common path with partners, sharing experiences and creating a space for reflection and community.*”

According to figures shared by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM),¹ **nearly 3,800 people died on migration routes within and from the Middle East and North Africa between January and December 2022:** the highest number since 2017, over 11% higher than the previous year. Worldwide, **more than 50,000 migrants have died between 2014 and 2022,**² without counting those lost at sea, kidnapped or missing in transit – those who are “invisible from birth to death,” in the words of Tareke Brhane, President of the survivor-led NGO Comitato 3 ottobre.

“We present our policy brief just a few days before the tenth anniversary of the tragic shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa, on the 3rd of October 2013, in which hundreds of migrants lost their lives – recalls Sister Carmen. – We cannot turn our backs on those who risk their lives to seek dignity and hope, nor can we ignore the humanitarian crises around the world that fuel the flow of people fleeing in search of safety. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers bring a profound human experience that they can share with us all, enriching our lives. To make this possible, we need to free ourselves from prejudice and fear, and stand alongside the most vulnerable; only then we will be able to build a world that does not exclude anyone.”

Conceived as a space to reflect on key development issues from a variety of perspectives, UISG’s Sister-led dialogues identify measures to empower communities on the global margins, and **help to** build a coalition of people and institutions to advocate for a safe and prosperous future for all. This year’s encounters will culminate in the first-ever **UISG Advocacy Forum**, taking place in Rome on **October 23rd and 24th, 2023**. Under the title *Religious Women: Leadership and Development*, UISG will gather its global networks in Rome for a two-day discussion aiming to identify priority areas for national, regional and international advocacy that can lead to systemic change, linking traditional wisdom and spirituality to emerging needs deriving from the rapid transformation of our societies.

Download the policy brief: [UISG-Policy-Brief-Sister-led-dialogue-on-migration-web-English-version.pdf](https://www.uisg.org/en/policy-brief-sister-led-dialogue-on-migration-web-english-version.pdf)

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International Union of Superiors General (UISG)

The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) is a membership organisation representing over 600,000 Catholic Sisters worldwide. Established in 1965 and inspired by the Second Vatican Council, its main objective is to promote deeper collaboration between Catholic women’s congregations. Currently, UISG is composed of 1,903 Superiors General worldwide. Alongside its core mission of training, supporting and connecting members, UISG acts as an umbrella organisation for Sisters engaged in tackling some of the world’s most pressing development challenges. In 2023, UISG is hosting a series of dialogues with representatives of governments, intergovernmental organisations, Vatican institutions, civil society, academia and the press, inviting them to join Catholic Sisters in discussing key issues for the sustainable development of our societies and the protection of vulnerable communities.

To learn more about the **International Union of Superiors General**: <https://www.uisg.org/en/>

To learn more about **Sisters Advocating Globally**: <https://advocacy.uisg.org/>

¹ <https://www.iom.int/news/deaths-migration-routes-mena-highest-2017-iom-2022-data-reveals>

² <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/11/1130997>